United Nations A/71/204

General Assembly

Distr.: General
25 July 2016

Original: English

Seventy-first session
Item 74 (a) of the provisional agenda*
Oceans and the law of the sea: oceans and the law of the sea

Report on the work of the United Nations Open-ended Informal Consultative Process on Oceans and the Law of the Sea at its seventeenth meeting

Letter dated 20 July 2016 from the Co-Chairs of the Informal Consultative Process addressed to the President of the General Assembly

Pursuant to General Assembly resolution 70/235, we were appointed as the Co-Chairs of the seventeenth meeting of the United Nations Open-ended Informal Consultative Process on Oceans and the Law of the Sea.

We have the honour to submit to you the attached report on the work of the Informal Consultative Process at its seventeenth meeting, which was held at United Nations Headquarters from 13 to 17 June 2016. The outcome of the meeting consists of our summary of issues and ideas raised during the meeting, in particular with regard to the topic of focus: "Marine debris, plastics and microplastics".

In line with past practice, we kindly request that the present letter and the report be circulated as a document of the General Assembly under item 74 (a) of the provisional agenda.

(*Signed*) Gustavo **Meza-Cuadra**
Nicholas **Emiliou**
Co-Chairs

* A/71/150.

16-12895 (E) 050816

Please recycle

Seventeenth meeting of the United Nations Open-ended Informal Consultative Process on Oceans and the Law of the Sea

(13-17 June 2016)

Co-Chairs' summary of discussions[1]

1. The United Nations Open-ended Informal Consultative Process on Oceans and the Law of the Sea (the Informal Consultative Process) held its seventeenth meeting from 13 to 17 June 2016. Pursuant to General Assembly resolution 69/245, as recalled by the Assembly in resolution 70/235, the meeting focused its discussions on the topic entitled "Marine debris, plastics and microplastics".

2. The meeting was attended by representatives of 60 States, 12 intergovernmental organizations and other bodies and entities, and eight non-governmental organizations.[2]

3. The following supporting documentation was available to the meeting: (a) report of the Secretary-General on oceans and the law of the sea on the topic of focus of the seventeenth meeting of the Informal Consultative Process (A/71/74); and (b) format and annotated provisional agenda of the meeting (A/AC.259/L.17).

Agenda items 1 and 2
Opening of the meeting and adoption of the agenda

4. The Co-Chairs, Gustavo Meza-Cuadra (Peru) and Nicholas Emiliou (Cyprus), appointed by the President of the General Assembly, opened the meeting.

5. Opening remarks were made by the Under-Secretary-General for Legal Affairs and by the Assistant Secretary-General for Economic Development on behalf of the Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs.

6. The meeting adopted the format and annotated provisional agenda and approved the proposed organization of work.

Agenda item 3
General exchange of views

7. A general exchange of views took place at the plenary meetings on 13 and 16 June on the Informal Consultative Process and on the topic of focus, "Marine debris, plastics and microplastics", as reflected below (paras. 8-11). The discussions held on the topic of focus within the panel segments are reflected in paragraphs 12-73 below.

8. It was recalled that the Informal Consultative Process was established to promote an integrated approach to all relevant aspects of oceans and seas, and to address the need to improve coordination and cooperation at both the intergovernmental and inter-agency levels. Several delegations noted that the Informal Consultative Process was a unique platform for the discussion of many issues related to oceans and the law

[1] The summary is intended for reference purposes only and not as a record of the discussions.

[2] A list of participants is available on the website of the Division for Ocean Affairs and the Law of the Sea at http://www.un.org/Depts/los/index.htm.

of the sea. It was also noted that the Informal Consultative Process provided an enabling forum through which States could examine outstanding issues and gaps in the implementation of the outcomes of major summits on sustainable development and address new and emerging challenges.

9. In the context of the upcoming review of the effectiveness and utility of the Informal Consultative Process to take place at the seventy-first session of the General Assembly, several delegations expressed their support for the continuation of the Informal Consultative Process (see also para. 84 below). Those delegations called for the selection of future topics of the Informal Consultative Process to reflect the interaction with other United Nations processes and the need to integrate all three pillars of sustainable development. Those delegations further noted that for the effective implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the role of the Informal Consultative Process must be recognized. Another delegation noted that there were other forums to discuss the 2030 Agenda.

10. Several delegations expressed support for the interaction of the Informal Consultative Process with other ongoing oceans-related processes, such as the Regular Process for Global Reporting and Assessment of the State of the Marine Environment, including Socioeconomic Aspects (Regular Process), as well as other processes relating to the implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 14 of the 2030 Agenda.

11. Delegations expressed their appreciation for the voluntary trust fund for the purpose of assisting developing countries, in particular least developed countries, small island developing States and landlocked developing States, to attend the meetings of the Informal Consultative Process, noting with satisfaction the participation of delegates and panellists from developing countries at the present meeting thanks to assistance from the fund. The Director of the Division for Ocean Affairs and the Law of the Sea provided an update on the status of the trust fund, highlighting that, as a result of the lack of contributions over the past 12 months, should the mandate of the Informal Consultative Process be extended the fund would no longer be viable after 2017 unless additional contributions were received. In that regard, the Director recalled paragraph 310 of General Assembly resolution 70/235, whereby the Assembly expressed serious concern regarding the lack of resources available in the trust fund and urged Member States to make financial contributions to the fund. Several delegations expressed their gratitude to States that had made contributions to the fund in the past and, emphasizing that the fund was key to making the Informal Consultative Process more meaningful and inclusive, further encouraged States to make contributions to the fund.

Topic of focus

12. During the plenary discussions, many delegations welcomed the topic of focus, noting the impacts of accumulating marine debris, plastics and microplastics and the significant threat they posed to the marine environment and marine life. In that regard, delegations expressed appreciation for the report of the Secretary-General on oceans and the law of the sea (A/71/74). It was highlighted that the size of the problem had increased exponentially since the topic of marine debris was addressed at the sixth meeting of the Informal Consultative Process, in 2005. It was noted that marine debris in general, and plastics in particular, were some of the

greatest environmental concerns of our times, along with climate change, ocean acidification and loss of biodiversity.

13. A number of delegations expressed concern over the increasing number of species affected by entanglement with or ingestion of marine debris. It was also noted by some delegations that plastics transported alien invasive species. Several delegations stressed that marine debris, plastics and microplastics also had a direct impact on the health, safety and livelihoods of people, in particular coastal populations, and on economies, by hindering activities at sea, such as fishing, tourism and navigation.

14. Several delegations highlighted that the issue of marine debris, plastics and microplastics directly affected the sustainable development aspirations of developing States, and emphasized the vulnerability of small island developing States which, as custodians of vast areas of oceans and seas, faced an existential threat from and were disproportionately affected by the effects of pollution from plastics. It was noted that many small island developing States in the Pacific ocean were located in the path of ocean gyres, which promoted the formation of the "garbage patches", and that they were thus particularly vulnerable to the accumulation of garbage within their maritime zones. Several delegations recalled the SIDS Accelerated Modalities of Action (SAMOA) Pathway.

15. Concern was expressed by several delegations over the so-called "garbage patches" in the Indian Ocean, the North Atlantic Ocean and the North Pacific Ocean, emphasizing that the size of the North Pacific patch was as large as 15 million square kilometres. It was recalled by several delegations that 90 per cent of marine debris in those patches comprised plastics, and that plastics represented 60 to 80 per cent of marine debris in the oceans globally. Several delegations further emphasized that an estimated 8-12 million tons of plastics reached the marine environment every year, where it was found at all depths of the water column down to the ocean floor, at all latitudes, including within Arctic ice, and both within and beyond areas of national jurisdiction. Several delegations drew attention to studies highlighting that, by 2050, there would be more plastics than fish in the ocean under a business-as-usual scenario.

16. Many delegations observed that plastics persisted in the environment for generations, breaking down into increasingly smaller pieces as microplastics and nano-plastics. Some delegations noted that plastics could accumulate as they moved up through the food chain, taking with them persistent, bioaccumulative and toxic chemicals, such as phthalates, often used in the production of plastics, and environmental contaminants, such as polychlorinated biphenyls, that may adsorb to plastic particles while in the ocean. The presence of microplastics in seafood was highlighted by several delegations as a serious threat to food security, and the possible direct effect on human health was also stressed.

17. At the same time, the benefits of plastics were noted by several delegations, including solidity, durability, low production cost and ready availability. They also acknowledged, however, that the durability and ready availability of plastics also presented a significant challenge since they persisted and accumulated in the oceans and seas.

18. Several delegations noted that the majority of marine debris originated on land and was comprised of single-use plastics from land-based sources, including as

packing materials and microbeads from cosmetics and detergents. Several delegations pointed out the need to also address sea-based, in addition to land-based, sources of marine debris, plastics and microplastics, expressed concern regarding marine debris from fishing gear, such as fish aggregating devices, and derelict fishing gear. In that regard, the view was expressed that the perspectives of developing States needed to be taken into consideration before certain tools or equipment connected to livelihoods of communities were banned. A proposal was made to initiate a discount programme for fishers who returned old fishing gear towards the purchase of new fishing gear, which could be done through the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO). Several delegations also expressed concern regarding microplastics debris associated with deep-sea sediments, in the light of the emergence of deep-sea mining.

19. Many delegations drew attention to the findings of the first global integrated marine assessment, prepared under the Regular Process, in particular chapter 25 of the assessment, on marine debris.

20. Highlighting that the problem of microplastics was a recent phenomenon, which needed to be further understood, many delegations underscored that data and knowledge gaps existed with regard to the entire life cycle of plastics, including regarding their fragmentation into microplastics and nano-plastics; their pathways through the environment, including their ultimate fate; and their actual impacts on marine biodiversity and the marine food web, as well as the potential impacts on human health. In that regard, additional research and monitoring were encouraged by several delegations. It was noted that, although reports on the ubiquity and concentration of plastics in the ocean were based on modelling, those reports could be used to focus future efforts. Despite the gaps in information, several delegations stressed that there was enough information to take immediate action, with some delegations highlighting the application of the precautionary approach.

21. Many delegations recalled that marine debris, plastics and microplastics were specifically addressed in target 14.1 of Goal 14 of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, in which a commitment was made to, by 2025, prevent and significantly reduce marine pollution of all kinds, in particular from land-based activities, including marine debris and nutrient pollution. Given the cross-cutting nature of the problem, the relevance of other Sustainable Development Goals was noted, including Goal 4, on education, Goal 6, on clean water and sanitation, Goal 12, on sustainable consumption and production patterns, and Goal 15, on the sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems. Several delegations also reminded the meeting of the calls made by the General Assembly in its annual resolutions on oceans and the law of the sea and on sustainable fisheries to address the issue of marine debris. Several other delegations highlighted the adoption of a resolution on marine plastic litter and microplastics by the United Nations Environment Assembly in May 2016. Attention was also drawn by several delegations to the Group of Seven Action Plan to Combat Marine Litter, adopted in June 2015, and to the adoption of the Group of Seven Ise-Shima Leaders' Declaration and the communiqué of the Group of Seven Toyama Environment Ministers Meeting, in both of which the issue of marine litter was addressed. Many delegations highlighted the importance of implementing Sustainable Development Goal 14, including to address marine debris, plastics and microplastics. Several delegations welcomed the convening of the United Nations Conference to Support the Implementation of Sustainable Development Goal14: Conserve and Sustainably Use

the Oceans, Seas and Marine Resources for Sustainable Development, which, in accordance with General Assembly resolution 70/226, would be held in Fiji from 5 to 9 June 2017.

22. Many delegations highlighted the central role of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, in particular part XII thereof, on the protection and preservation of the marine environment, in addressing marine debris, plastics and microplastics and in realizing the commitments reflected in Sustainable Development Goal 14. It was recalled that the Convention provided the legal framework within which all activities in the oceans and seas must be carried out, and was, in turn, complemented by many other legal instruments whose effective implementation was critical to addressing the issue of marine debris, plastics and microplastics. Reference was also made to the Agreement for the Implementation of the Provisions of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea of 10 December 1982 relating to the Conservation and Management of Straddling Fish Stocks and Highly Migratory Fish Stocks and its article 5, which required States parties to cooperate, inter alia, to minimize pollution, waste and catch by lost or abandoned gear. Several delegations also highlighted the role of the mandatory instruments adopted under the auspices of the International Maritime Organization (IMO) in the reduction of marine pollution, and specifically of marine debris, including the International Convention for the Prevention of Pollution from Ships (MARPOL Convention) and annex V thereto, containing regulations for the prevention of pollution by garbage from ships. The need to consider the role of the Basel Convention on the Control of Transboundary Movements of Hazardous Wastes and their Disposal was also underlined.

23. The need to address the issue of marine debris, plastics and microplastics, both downstream, through improved mechanisms for waste management, disposal and recycling, and upstream, by addressing consumption and production patterns including through awareness-raising campaigns, was emphasized by many delegations. Several delegations stressed the importance of prioritizing prevention, noting that it was easier to prevent marine debris from entering the oceans than it was to remove it, and called for action at the design and marketing stages of the product cycle. Many delegations suggested that improvements in product design could help make products reusable, and that technological developments could improve possibilities for recycling, including the conversion of old plastic into viable products, and for developing a circular economy. The importance of research at the national level was highlighted by several delegations. In particular, it was noted that research could assist in consolidating existing data, establishing baselines on sources and trends and supporting effective management strategies. The need to adopt an integrated approach to the management of activities on land and at sea was emphasized.

24. Several delegations highlighted the importance of including industry, business and civil society in developing solutions. The view was expressed that the private sector, in particular, was a key stakeholder, and that it was necessary to foster market-based solutions where there was an incentive to reduce waste and develop innovative alternatives to plastics. It was noted, in that regard, that models that considered life-cycle impacts could create economic prosperity.

25. The shared responsibility between States, the private sector and consumers in combating marine debris, plastics and microplastics, was highlighted. The role of

Governments in regulating and sanctioning the production, commercialization, transport, sorting, collection, recycling and disposal of solid waste, in particular plastics, was emphasized. Delegations shared information on their policies, legislation and initiatives to address the issue of marine debris, plastics and microplastics at the national and local levels. These included amendments to legislation and policy to improve protection of the marine environment; prevention measures, such as clean-ups, education and awareness-raising; waste minimization at source, including incentives to reduce packaging waste; improved mechanisms and infrastructure for waste management, disposal and recycling, including the provision of adequate port infrastructure and addressing the issue of abandoned, lost and discarded fishing gear; and modification of patterns of production and consumption, including by limiting the use of plastics, prohibiting single-use items made of plastic, such as plastic bags, and prohibiting microplastics in the cosmetic and hygiene industries. Reference was also made to programmes to reduce marine debris in areas used by species as feeding grounds or migration paths; development of a sustainable circular plastic economy; establishment of monitoring of physical, chemical and biological parameters of water and sediments; and establishment of special funds destined to finance waste management and waste minimization projects. One delegation called on States to include in their national legislation a definition of marine debris, a mandatory and progressive reduction of at least 50 per cent of solid waste, and compulsory collection, final disposal and recycling of debris. That delegation also suggested the progressive elimination of plastics, a moratorium on resins while biodegradable and recyclable substitutes were being investigated and a requirement to inform consumers about the specific impacts of plastics, as well as developing education and incentives programmes aimed at artisanal fishers in relation to ghost fishing and marine debris.

26. Highlighting the transboundary nature of pollution from marine debris, plastics and microplastics and the challenges associated with managing their impacts without having control over the source of the pollution, many delegations stressed the need to enhance cooperation and coordination at the regional and global levels to tackle the problem, in line with the obligation to cooperate under the Convention on the Law of the Sea.

27. With regard to cooperation at the regional level, several delegations noted that some regional seas conventions had, in recent years, adopted or started working on action plans to deal with marine litter. It was noted that those plans sought to address the treatment and disposal of waste from industries and populations in coastal areas, tourism, fisheries and shipping, as well as abandoned, lost and discarded fishing gear. Among the examples given were the marine action plans adopted by the Baltic Marine Environment Protection Commission and the OSPAR Commission for the Protection of the Marine Environment of the North-East Atlantic, as well as in the context of the Barcelona Convention on the Protection of the Marine Environment and the Coastal Region of the Mediterranean. The work being carried out under the Convention on the Protection of the Black Sea against Pollution on the development of an action plan was also mentioned, as was the work carried out by the Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme. Several delegations also highlighted other regional strategies, such as the European Union directive establishing a Framework for Community Action in the Field of Marine Environmental Policy (Marine Strategy Framework Directive) to address the issue, including monitoring programmes, land and port waste reception facilities

and coordination with regional seas conventions. The work of regional fisheries management organizations in addressing abandoned, lost and discarded fishing gear was also noted by several delegations.

28. The need to take into account and encourage international cooperation on issues of marine debris among the scientific community and among relevant intergovernmental organizations and bodies, such as FAO, the International Whaling Commission and the Joint Group of Experts on the Scientific Aspects of Marine Environmental Protection was also highlighted.

29. International cooperation to foster effective capacity-building initiatives and the transfer of technologies was also considered necessary by several delegations to address the difference in capacity among countries, especially to assist developing States, in particular small island developing States, the least developed countries and land-locked developing States, to address problems associated with marine debris, plastics and microplastics, including inadequate infrastructure, lack of resources and limited expertise. The view was expressed that establishing deadlines and mandatory measures for those States without such cooperation was not feasible. The role of international cooperation in sharing best practices, including on waste management systems, was also noted.

Area of focus: marine debris, plastics and microplastics

30. In accordance with the format and annotated provisional agenda, the discussion panel on the topic of focus was organized in two segments structured around: (a) the environmental, social and economic dimensions of marine debris, plastics and microplastics and progress made in preventing, reducing and controlling pollution from marine debris, plastics and microplastics; and (b) challenges, lessons learned, best practices and the way forward to prevent, reduce and control pollution from marine debris, plastics and microplastics. The segments were launched by presentations from panellists,[3] followed by interactive discussions.

1. Environmental, social and economic dimensions of marine debris, plastics and microplastics and progress made in preventing, reducing and controlling pollution from marine debris, plastics and microplastics

(a) Panel presentations

31. In the first segment, the Chair of the Joint Group of Experts on the Scientific Aspects of Marine Environmental Protection and of its Working Group on Microplastics, Peter Kershaw, presented insights from reports of the Group of Experts on microplastics. The former Joint Coordinator of the Group of Experts during the first cycle of the Regular Process, Lorna Inniss, provided an overview of the issue of marine debris, plastics and microplastics based on the first global integrated marine assessment, focusing on its chapter 25, on marine debris. Jenna Jambeck, Associate Professor of Environmental Engineering at the College of Engineering of the University of Georgia, addressed plastic waste inputs from land-based sources. Kelsey Richardson, former Marine Debris Consultant at the

[3] These presentations, along with a summary thereof, are available on the website of the Division for Ocean Affairs and the Law of the Sea at http://www.un.org/depts/los/consultative_process/consultative_process.htm.

Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme, addressed marine pollution originating from purse-seine and longline fishing vessel operations in the Western and Central Pacific Ocean. Peter Van den Dries, Policy Adviser of the Flemish Waste Agency, reported on the collection of ships' waste in Belgian seaports. The Director of the Marine Environment Division of IMO, Stefan Micallef, highlighted the work of IMO to address marine debris, plastic and microplastic from ships. Andrew Booth, Senior Research Scientist at SINTEF Materials and Chemistry, gave a presentation on the ecotoxicological impacts of microplastics on marine organisms, including species providing a source of food. The Chair of the Scientific Committee of the Inter-American Convention for the Protection and Conservation of Sea Turtles, Diego Alejandro Albareda, provided information on sea turtles and plastic debris in South America. Hideshige Takada, Professor at the Laboratory of Organic Geochemistry at the Tokyo University of Agriculture and Technology, provided an overview of historical trends in microplastic pollution and its chemical impact on marine ecosystems. Britta Denise Hardesty, Senior Research Scientist at the Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organization in Australia, outlined a risk-based approach to evaluating pollution from marine plastic and opportunities for reducing inputs. Tamara Galloway, Professor at the College of Life and Environmental Sciences, University of Exeter, focused on the risks posed by marine microplastic and nano-plastic debris to human health. The Chair of the Global Agenda Council on Oceans of the World Economic Forum, Nishan Degnarain, provided an economic perspective on marine plastic debris.

(b) Panel discussions

32. Addressing the impacts of plastics on marine life, Mr. Albareda noted, in response to a question, that sea turtles were the most threatened migratory species given their biological and behavioural characteristics. Not only was plastic affecting the habitats used by sea turtles for spawning, but they also mistook it for food. He observed that the diversity of challenges faced by sea turtles made them an excellent indicator on the impact of plastics on other species. In response to a question on research on the impact of plastics and microplastics on higher trophic levels, such as sharks and whales, Mr. Booth explained that research on lower trophic levels was more cost-efficient and a much quicker process in light of the difficulties associated with research on larger species in a controlled environment, such as the need for special facilities. Mr. Takada indicated that, while some additives were found in the tissue of mussels and seabass, there was no data showing additives of plastics in the tissue of fish consumed by humans, while acknowledging that more study was needed on this issue.

33. Given that studies had found a correlation between consumption of microplastics by several species and changes in their reproduction patterns, the question was raised whether food security might be affected. Ms. Galloway clarified that the changes in reproduction patterns in oysters were attributed to lack of nutrition that resulted from the consumption of microplastics instead of food rather than from ecotoxicological impacts. She highlighted that reductions in the amount of microplastics in the marine environment would help to address the problem, but also noted that there was still a question as to whether the levels of toxicity of specific compounds of plastics made a difference in marine species. Mr. Takada expressed the view that future increases in plastics in the marine environment could

lead to a decrease in biodiversity and food security as a result of toxicological effects together with physical damages.

34. Mr. Booth noted that there was limited knowledge on transfer routes for plastic contaminants into human beings and that, while the uptake on marine organisms was established, there was also limited knowledge on the ecotoxicological impacts. Ms. Hardesty noted that, with the exception of some small fish species such as anchovies, where the entire fish was eaten, the digestive tract of the animals where the contaminants tended to accumulate was removed before consumption.

35. Ms. Galloway described the difficulties associated with conducting complex research projects on human subjects, which explained why the scientific community had not yet been able to ascertain whether consumption of marine species contaminated with microplastics had an impact on human health. In that regard, she pointed to the need for Governments to provide the required resources and also noted the difficulty in obtaining volunteers for these studies. Mr. Booth highlighted the importance of developing non-invasive methods to conduct this type of research. Asked whether the existing research had found any difference in toxicity between primary microplastics and secondary microplastics, Ms. Galloway observed that while there was no conclusive evidence on the topic so far, it was possible to predict that there would be no difference in terms of toxicity as contaminants would adhere to primary and secondary microplastics in the same manner.

36. Participants observed that, while increasing attention was being paid to the issue of microplastics, there were still significant gaps in knowledge concerning its effects on human beings and further research was therefore needed. One participant highlighted a particular research gap regarding the effects of plastics and microplastics on fish stocks. Addressing what could be done by Governments to guide research in support of policymaking, Mr. Booth highlighted the benefits of making plastics and microplastics the subject of international research activity, underlining the need for large-scale projects addressing linkages between exposure by marine species consumed by humans and direct exposure by humans. Ms. Hardesty noted that one of the key knowledge gaps concerned ingestion and entanglement in respect of whales and dolphins. She further noted that entanglement of all of the other major marine taxa had not been researched. Another area that required more research was the loss rates for debris throughout the watershed, not only in deposition zones in coastal areas. She noted that a study of possible solutions, including on how to change human behaviour, was needed. She added that studying sentinel species, such as seabirds, and their plasticizer load around the world, would be useful in predicting the impact of plastic debris. In response to a question, Ms. Hardesty stressed that there were some important data that could be collected from beach clean-ups and collecting such data would allow predictions to be made about the debris found in other coastal areas. Ms. Inniss anticipated that, for the second cycle of the Regular Process, there would be progress with respect to area coverage, as well as increased expertise in data collection and analysis, monitoring and prevention of marine litter.

37. With regard to required policy interventions, Ms. Galloway stated that any policy intervention that prevented plastics from reaching the ocean and raised public awareness on the risk associated with the ingestion of plastics, was likely to be useful. Ms. Hardesty drew attention to the benefits of a circular economy, which incentivized reusing products. The use of rubbish or litter traps at rivers was also

considered beneficial to reduce litter inputs to the ocean. Mr. Takada concurred that, since current technology did not provide solutions for the removal of microplastics from the ocean, reduction of inputs of plastics and microplastics from land-based sources was crucial.

38. Plastic producers were highlighted as important stakeholders, as reductions in the amounts of plastic waste could already be achieved at the manufacturing stage or by providing for appropriate disposal of the products. Another participant recommended classification of plastics in accordance with their harm, and a ban on the most toxic or difficult to recycle, in accordance with the precautionary principle. In that regard, Mr. Takada recommended that polyvinyl chloride and polyethylene should be the plastics considered first as they were the most toxic and had the most sorption capacity, respectively. A view was expressed that States could consider adopting legislation to reduce plastic production at source, including by making it mandatory for manufacturers to provide information on the damage and harm to the oceans and biodiversity that their products could have. Recalling that plastics were made of fossil fuels and would release CO_2 on final incineration, Mr. Takada emphasized that all options to prevent, reduce and control pollution from marine debris, plastics and microplastics should be in keeping with the goals of the Paris Agreement.

39. Several participants highlighted the need for education, awareness-raising and capacity-building. One participant highlighted a national programme which awarded beaches clean of plastics and other debris a presidential prize, as well as promotion in national tourist advertising campaigns. The State also had a certification system for sustainable companies that, among other things, eliminated the use of plastics in their installations.

40. Ms. Hardesty cited as examples of beneficial policies those that incentivized the use of port facilities for discarding fishing gear, while noting that high fees and levies for these services tended to have negative effects. In response to a question on whether ports could control the final disposal of solid waste to make sure that valuable material was recycled, Mr. Micallef noted that that was mainly an issue of general waste management strategies in the respective countries as well as of coordination between port facilities and other waste management facilities on land. Mr. Van den Dries added in that regard that even if the port could ensure that the garbage was brought to authorized reception facilities, it would likely not control whether the final disposal of the garbage was done in an environmentally sound manner. In that regard, he stressed the need to develop waste management strategies that integrated waste from land-based as well as ship-based sources.

41. Regarding compliance with annex V to the MARPOL Convention, the responsibilities of the port State in terms of providing adequate port reception facilities, as well as of the flag State in terms of ensuring compliance with the regulations, were highlighted. Mr. Micallef noted that compliance by the ship was often influenced by the crew's awareness and thus was essentially a matter of proper training and education. He added that mechanisms were in place, such as garbage management plans and garbage record books, that were subject to port State control. With respect to port reception facilities, Mr. Micallef noted that it might be difficult to ensure that States honoured their obligations. He recalled that one of the requirements under the MARPOL Convention was for the master of the ship to

report any inadequacy of port reception facilities to the ship's flag State, which would then report it to IMO as well as the relevant port State.

42. Addressing the challenges faced by small island developing States in providing adequate waste reception facilities at their ports owing to their unique circumstances, including shortage of land for disposal sites or limited infrastructure and resources, Mr. Micallef recalled that IMO had adopted amendments to annex V of the MARPOL Convention and had developed guidelines for the development of a regional reception facilities plan, which accommodated the particular circumstances of small island developing States. Mr. Van den Dries drew attention to the polluter pays principle, noting that small island developing States could use waste disposal fees paid by ships to improve the adequacy of their port reception facilities and develop, within a general waste strategy, a cost-efficient waste collection and treatment infrastructure.

43. In response to a question regarding the designation of special areas in accordance with annex V to the MARPOL convention, Mr. Micallef noted that the designation of special areas was a process driven by States members of IMO, including possibly by several States in a region, through the presentation of a proposal to IMO, while the designation, as well as the decision on the date of effect and the specific requirements, were undertaken by the Marine Environment Protection Committee of IMO.

44. Responding to a question, Mr. Micallef clarified that the MARPOL Convention and the Convention on the Prevention of Marine Pollution by Dumping of Wastes and Other Matter of 1972 (London Convention) and its Protocol did not include an obligation to report sightings of marine debris, including entanglements, that could cause a hazard to navigation, but that the International Convention for the Safety of Life at Sea provided for masters of ships to inform ships in the vicinity and competent authorities about any debris encountered that could cause a hazard to navigation. Ms. Richardson added that fisheries observers in the Pacific did report on abandoned, lost and discarded fishing gear they encountered. In the context of the potential traceability of fishing gear to vessels and flag States, reference was made to the draft guidelines for the marking of fishing gear that would be before the FAO Committee on Fisheries in July 2016.

45. One participant enquired whether there was a need for regulation and enforcement to better control fish aggregating devices in the ocean. Ms. Hardesty underlined that tagging such devices, which would allow their monitoring, labelling and collection after the fishing season, could be done quite inexpensively. She observed, however, that fishers sometimes cut markings from their fish aggregating devices to avoid having to retrieve them. She suggested that establishing a penalty-free period during which those devices could be tagged and recovered would provide a good opportunity to deal with the problem. On the regulation of other fishing gear, Mr. Albareda noted that, in artisanal fisheries, the use of gill nets made of monofilaments was very difficult to regulate, because of the informal nature of those fisheries. He added, however, that work on finding replacements to those nets was ongoing.

46. Responding to a question regarding biopolymers as alternatives to plastics, Ms. Jambeck clarified that there were currently only two types of "biodegradable" polymers on the market, an oxo-degradable form that simply fragmented into smaller pieces faster when exposed to weathering without being truly

biodegradable, and another one that was biodegradable only in an industrial composting setting, meaning that it would not biodegrade in an ocean environment. The importance of continuing research to find alternative solutions to plastics that would be truly biodegradable in any environment was stressed. Addressing a question on large-scale targeted innovation, Mr. Degnarain cited the following areas where this could take place: bio-benign materials that would not have an impact on the environment, materials that could facilitate multilayer processing, a super polymer that would have the benefits of today's plastics with superior recyclability, chemical marking technologies that would facilitate much more efficient recycling or reuse, and chemical recycling technologies.

47. With regard to public-private partnerships to address plastic waste, Mr. Degnarain observed that public-private partnerships could be useful in setting global packaging standards, clearly defining global labelling and marketing standards, standardizing collection and sorting archetypes, creating a global framework for reusable business-to-business packaging, creating the design needs for compostable plastics, strengthening the market for recyclable plastics, and demonstrating the viability of high-value cascading recycling.

48. Some participants noted that while some of the required actions to address marine debris, plastics and microplastics were to be adopted at the national level, regional and global measures were also required, given the transboundary nature of the problem.

49. In response to a question regarding suggestions for marine debris-related measures worth considering in the context of the Preparatory Committee established by General Assembly resolution 69/292: Development of an international legally binding instrument under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea on the conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity of areas beyond national jurisdiction, Ms. Richardson emphasized the value of integrating the monitoring and management of marine debris pollution into regional fisheries observer programmes in order to fill information gaps and support the enforcement of pollution prevention measures on the high seas.

2. Challenges, lessons learned, best practices and the way forward to prevent, reduce and control pollution from marine debris, plastics and microplastics

(a) Panel presentations

50. In the second segment, the Deputy Minister of the Coordinating Ministry for Maritime Affairs of Indonesia, Arif Havas Oegroseno, presented the experience of Indonesia in addressing marine debris, plastics and microplastics. The Director of Environmental Management and Conservation at the National Environment and Planning Agency of Jamaica, Anthony Glenroy McKenzie, presented on the experience of Jamaica regarding challenges, lessons learned, best practices and the way forward. The Mayor of Dagupan City, Pangasinan Province, the Philippines, Belen Fernandez, presented local initiatives to prevent, reduce and remove marine debris while addressing socioeconomic issues that contributed to the phenomenon. Addressing challenges and solutions to marine debris, the Director of the Marine Debris Program of the United States National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, Nancy Wallace, underscored the anthropogenic nature of marine debris pollution, noting that humans therefore had the power to eliminate it. Nilufer Oral, Professor at Istanbul Bilgi University, discussed a regional seas

approach to prevent, reduce and control pollution from marine debris, plastics and microplastics, highlighting lessons learned and opportunities for the future. Judith Neumann, Desk Officer on Protection of the Marine Environment at the Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation, Building and Nuclear Safety of Germany, provided an overview of international and national processes to implement the Group of Seven Action Plan to Combat Marine Litter and the European Union Marine Strategy Framework Directive. Johanna Eriksson, Senior Adviser at the Swedish Agency for Marine and Water Management, addressed the issue of regional action plans as a way to prevent and reduce marine debris, plastics and microplastics. Karen Raubenheimer of the University of Wollongong, Australia, explored the need for, and feasibility of, a new international legally binding framework to prevent marine plastic debris. Heidi Savelli, Programme Officer of the Global Programme of Action for the Protection of the Marine Environment from Land-based Activities of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), provided an overview of the outcomes of the second session of the United Nations Environment Assembly. The representative of the World Bank, Georg Caspary, addressed the role of the World Bank's Pollution Management and Environmental Health programme in strengthening solid waste management. The Chief Sustainability Officer of Covestro, Richard Northcote, presenting on behalf of the World Plastics Council, provided an overview of the commitments by plastic producers to prevent marine litter. The Managing Director of the Closed Loop Fund, Rob Kaplan, provided a presentation on the $100 million social impact fund, which invests in building municipal recycling infrastructure and in sustainable materials and packaging. The Program Manager for Oceans and Wildlife of World Animal Protection, Elizabeth Hogan, provided an overview of market-based and design change solutions to address the impact of lost and discarded fishing gear, including through the work of the Global Ghost Gear Initiative. The Global Sustainability Director of Dow Packaging and Specialty Plastics, Jeff Wooster, provided an overview of sustainable packaging innovations. The President of VIDA (Instituto para la Protección del Medio Ambiente), Arturo Alfaro Medina, highlighted efforts to address marine debris in Peru. The Chief Executive Officer of the Ocean Conservancy, Andreas Merkl, highlighted the need for economic incentives for waste management and collection, and identified emerging trends and technologies. Julia Reisser, an Oceanographer with The Ocean Cleanup foundation, provided an overview of new technological developments to prevent, intercept and extract marine plastic pollution using floating boom systems. The General Manager and Communications Director of Sustainable Coastlines, Camden Howitt, presented a range of awareness-raising activities to address marine debris, plastics and microplastics in the Pacific, in particular in small island developing States. The Executive Director and Founder of Cafeteria Culture, Debby Lee Cohen, described her experience with engaging New York city urban youth in upstream solutions to reduce marine debris, plastics and microplastics.

(b) Discussion

51. Participants highlighted the need to engage in prevention and waste reduction measures and to strengthen a circular plastic economy. The importance of developing an integrated strategy to address marine debris was also underscored. Mr. Oegroseno explained that Indonesia's waste banks initiative could be used to promote effective waste management as it provided an ongoing financial incentive for private actors to collect, sort and properly dispose of waste in exchange for

payment, thus ensuring that the value of waste material was recovered. He further highlighted an ongoing initiative to calculate the value of Indonesia's maritime economy, which took into account marine debris and waste.

52. Some participants underlined that all stakeholders, including Governments, consumers and industry had a role and collective responsibility in working together and acting to address the issue of marine debris, plastics and microplastics. Mr. Northcote noted that the plastics industry was partnering with Governments and non-governmental organizations in finding a way to address marine plastics pollution. Examples of such collaboration were provided, including regarding the design of new products, the phase out light-weight non-biodegradable plastic bags, the conversion of used fishing gear to energy, green business certification programmes, beach clean-ups, and awareness-raising. Mr. Oegroseno pointed out that Indonesia cooperated with different types of industry to address marine debris, namely transport, retail, finance, tourism and recycling.

53. Some participants highlighted that additional action could be undertaken by the industry in helping to change practices and behaviours to address marine debris, including product reconversions, a moratorium on certain highly polluting resins involved in plastics production, industry participation in global awareness-raising campaigns to highlight the impacts of plastic use and production, and compulsory labelling on plastics products to explain the health and environmental impacts of plastics to consumers. Mr. Northcote noted that production in the plastics industry followed demand. He stressed the important role of Governments in taking steps to regulate the plastics industry, noting that the plastics industry would comply with relevant legislation and regulations. He further stated that there was a wide range of different polymers and productive processes involved in the industry as a whole. Mr. Caspary noted that greater levels of ambition in addressing marine pollution were welcome, but should be followed-up by operational capability and finance in order to be implemented at the national level. He also stated that when a country was willing to discuss ambitious reduction and reuse plans, the World Bank could assist such ambitious programmes, including those focused on upstream sources of pollution.

54. One participant suggested that plastic products that were not necessary but widely used and disposed of after a single use, such as straws, should be avoided. The importance of biodegradable materials was also underlined, alongside the need to educate consumers not to dispose of any plastics, including biodegradable ones, in the environment. The responsibility of industry in developing technologies and using recyclable materials was considered very important in that regard. Addressing questions on whether industry was doing enough to foster innovation and identify alternatives to plastics, including developing standards for using a single polymer in packaging materials that would facilitate sorting and recycling, Mr. Northcote noted that the more complex a polymer was, the more difficult it was to recycle. He stated that increasing efficiencies, through proper carbon pricing and increased research and development in recapturing energy spent on production of plastics, could advance the recycling agenda. Mr. Caspary stated that the World Bank was collaborating with low income countries to help scale up innovation, but that they favoured implementing established solutions rather than innovative ones, given risks that were associated with new strategies. He stated that the World Bank was nevertheless working to modify existing solutions from the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development for scaled use in developing countries. In addition, Ms. Savelli stated that increasing

recyclability was largely dependent on the movement of plastics in the context of trade. She noted that improved labelling could have a strong impact on a country's ability to identify recyclable or problematic materials.

55. The important role of civil society and academia in addressing the problem of plastic pollution was also highlighted. Some participants underscored the need to raise awareness of plastic pollution among younger generations in order to create change at local and national levels. In that regard, Ms. Cohen emphasized the importance of promoting State-wide education on environmental and climate issues. She added that her organization was working on a multimedia toolkit to promote "zero waste cafeterias" to be released in New York city in July 2016, which had already generated national and international interest.

56. Mr. Medina indicated that many local authorities in Peru were motivated to undertake beach clean-up efforts because they had received government support, particularly when considering that pollution sources were often outside the municipalities. He noted that for waste management operations incentives were needed for companies operating at the pollution source. Some participants emphasized the need to include marine debris within the scope of regulations on waste management. Mr. Medina indicated that classification and ranking of the efforts by local authorities to prevent, reduce and control pollution from marine debris depended on the type of waste that was the subject of government policies on waste management, and he stressed the need for data improvements.

57. Participants highlighted the important work of volunteers in clean-up campaigns to develop data on the extent of marine debris. One delegation stressed the importance of such data in establishing baselines for policy development, as well as in categorizing waste, identifying trends and prioritizing hot spots. Mr. Medina stressed the importance of accuracy in data collection and recording and the need for related capacity-building. He noted that many volunteers did not keep accurate records, which often explained the use of estimates. Mr. Medina indicated that volunteers were inherently motivated to participate in clean-up campaigns because of their desire for clean beaches.

58. Addressing a question regarding how to assess the adequacy of port waste reception facilities, Mr. McKenzie noted that a facility which could handle the types and quantities of waste that it was required to accept, was considered adequate. He further observed that the creation of such facilities was a challenge for some developing States but that, even in the absence of such facilities, measures could be put in place to ensure that ship waste was not released into the environment.

59. Addressing clean-up technologies, some participants expressed concerns over the impacts of skimming technologies on marine biodiversity, such as planktonic organisms, and enquired as to whether efforts were being taken to prevent such impacts. Ms. Reisser indicated that environmental impact assessments were being conducted in pilot studies and that impacts on marine biodiversity were being taken into account in the design of prototypes. With regard to funding for research on skimming technologies and the long-term economics of skimming operations, Ms. Reisser explained that funding at the development stages had been provided by the Netherlands and from philanthropic and crowd-funding sources. In terms of long-term skimming operations, it was anticipated that sales of collected plastic that was uniform in nature, would provide the necessary revenues.

60. In response to a question as to what would change in the next 10 years to make recycling operations more economically viable, Mr. Merkl indicated that technological advances could improve the economics of recycling operations, for example, by providing a way for polymers to be converted into monomers and be fed back into plastic production, in much the same way as had already been done in the recycling of aluminium cans. Such advances would create economic incentives for the collection of plastic debris. In addition, he noted that improvements in the design of plastic products would make recycling operations more efficient.

61. One participant stressed the challenges faced by developing States, particularly those with long coastlines, in the collection and recycling of plastic bottles. Ms. Cohen suggested that bottle deposits could serve as an incentive for recycling, either by the consumer or by waste collectors. Ms. Savelli and Mr. Medina provided examples of taxes on polyethylene terephthalate (PET) bottles in some States, which financed recycling without added costs to government. It was explained that in one case the tax was given directly to collectors who transported the bottles to recycling centres. Mr. Medina also noted the benefits of marine debris reduction plans, which had been developed in Peru in cooperation with tourism and hotel companies. Mr. Kaplan and Mr. Wooster noted that recycling could fund its own costs, at least in the long term, but not the costs of waste management in general. Among the challenges faced by the recycling industry were the decrease in the price of oil and the consequent fluctuations in the value of commodities. In addition, recycling of plastics faced additional challenges, as the volume-to-weight ratio compared with the recycling of other materials was less optimal and therefore offered less incentives because of the lower returns. One participant noted that as the companies involved were global multinationals which generated waste disposed of in many countries, the Closed Loop Fund could consider expanding its activities outside of the United States of America. Mr. Kaplan noted that the possibility of expanding activities internationally was being considered. Mr. Caspary also noted that the World Bank was trying to enhance partnerships with the private sector for funding solutions, but so far the interest of the private sector had been scarce.

62. The need for subsidies to encourage greater efforts in the prevention, reduction and control of plastic pollution was emphasized by some participants. One delegation raised questions on how to generate subsidies and whether subsidization could be provided by external sources, such as the World Bank. Mr. Merkl emphasized that, while technological solutions were being developed, urgent efforts were needed to create the infrastructure to support collection and recycling operations, including through the use of subsidies. He explained that increasing government spending and donor funding to improve waste management operations at the source could lead to incremental changes in preventing plastic pollution in the oceans. In addition, improvements in product design could lead to revenue increases in recycling operations. Mr. Merkl stressed the need for a coherent path forward, in terms of building infrastructure and supporting industry in the same way as had been done for renewable technologies, such as solar panels.

63. In responding to a question regarding whether or not increased attention should be placed on compliance and monitoring in Operation Clean Sweep, Mr. Northcote stated that any initiatives towards increased compliance should ensure real results and not simply be used as a marketing opportunity to legitimize non-compliant parties.

64. One participant noted the importance of addressing abandoned, lost and discarded fishing gear, which had severe impacts on fisheries and marine ecosystems. It was suggested that that problem provided an incentive to the fishing industry for self-regulation. Ms. Hogan observed that standards to address abandoned, lost and discarded fishing gear should be included in the industry's sustainability schemes and in consumer labelling requirements. In response to a question on how Governments could support the work of the Global Ghost Gear Initiative, in particular in the context of prevention and clean up, Ms. Hogan explained that since data on abandoned, lost and discarded fishing gear was available in only a very few and specific areas, in particular where gear marking was prevalent, providing data on the type of lost gear would be a valuable contribution. This could be achieved by supporting open and non-penalizing schemes for the collection and reporting of data by fishers. In addition, she suggested that Governments could support the efforts of stakeholders interested in the collection of abandoned, lost and discarded fishing gear, for example by providing permits, improving collection facilities at ports, encouraging fishers to dispose of gear properly, and facilitating transport infrastructure, such as trucks, for the transfer of collected gear to recycling facilities.

65. Several participants provided information on the measures they had adopted to address abandoned, lost and discarded fishing gear, for example marking of gear and funding for improvement of disposal and collection facilities for such gear. With regard to fish aggregating devices, it was noted that that issue was being addressed in regional fisheries management organizations, following a recommendation by the General Assembly. Industry was also playing an important role by developing more environmentally friendly fish aggregating devices, including non-entangling devices and new and innovative solutions, such as the use of biodegradable materials in the production of such devices. In that regard, Ms. Hogan observed that a full transition to biodegradable materials in fish aggregating devices did not seem feasible, given that fishers required durable materials and that plastics provided the most economical solution.

66. Some participants noted the truly international and transboundary nature of the problem of marine debris and stressed the need for international cooperation in addressing the challenge. As an example, Mr. Howitt noted that beach clean-up efforts in Hawaii had encountered pollution originating from both sides of the Pacific. He stressed the importance of profiling these case studies in educational initiatives to raise awareness of the challenge of marine debris and plastic pollution.

67. The suggestion was made that a number of issues, such as assessment and reporting, promotion of funding for research, solid waste management, recycling and capacity-building, should be dealt with through international cooperation. One participant noted the local nature of the marine debris issue, stressing that there was no single solution given the different circumstances in various countries. In that regard, sharing best practices was considered useful. Another participant stressed the value of collating national experiences to better coordinate responses. One participant noted the possible utility of mobile telephone applications for researchers, non-governmental organizations and the general public in creating a global database on marine litter. Mr. Howitt indicated that there was no global or regional standard with regard to the issue, but that such an initiative would be useful for future collaboration and coordination of solutions, if it was flexible enough to take into account regional considerations and contexts.

68. Some participants queried whether the problem of plastic pollution could be addressed through existing instruments, such as the UNEP regional seas conventions or the Basel Convention. Ms. Oral indicated that there were different provisions in the various regional seas conventions and action plans that could provide a basis for the adoption of specific measures to address marine debris, plastics and microplastics. One participant stated that whether or not a legally binding approach was needed could be addressed on a case-by-case basis. Ms. Raubenheimer noted gaps and fragmentation in the framework of the UNEP regional seas conventions and protocols. She noted that many protocols currently in place dealt with water quality standards, as opposed to the upstream prevention of pollution, or were non-binding in nature and limited in scope to areas within national jurisdiction. She also indicated that the Basel Convention was not a suitable option at the international level and that it would be challenging to amend such an instrument or classify plastic as a hazardous waste, particularly in light of the wide range of available plastics and the number of products being developed in the market.

69. Some participants noted the need to strengthen the UNEP regional framework and address fragmentation and gaps in implementation of existing instruments. Ms. Eriksson noted that the implementation of regional action plans had been more resource-demanding than anticipated, since the extent to which a lead country would need inputs from other countries had not been foreseen. A question was asked whether there was a centralized funding mechanism for the Group of Seven Action Plan and what would be the next steps for its implementation. Neumann indicated that there was no general funding and that, in that regard, the Group of Seven took a voluntary approach, where lead countries were identified for the measures agreed upon.

70. Some participants highlighted the potential value of developing a global legal framework for land-based plastic pollution in order to address the root cause of plastic pollution. Ms. Oral recognized that there was no global legally binding instrument addressing land-based sources of pollution other than the framework provisions of the Convention on the Law of the Sea. She pointed to the practical difficulties of adopting such an instrument, including the length of time for negotiations and timely ratification by States. Ms. Neumann suggested that a solution could be found in addressing the problem at the regional and national levels. One participant observed the relevance of the concept of a "global problem with local solutions" in that regard. Ms. Wallace noted that the Global Partnership on Marine Litter, while not being legally binding in nature, served as a cooperation platform which provided an opportunity for wide participation, and invited States to further develop the Partnership. Ms. Raubenheimer, as supported by a delegation, suggested that the Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer provided a helpful model on how to address plastic pollution.

71. Some participants suggested that marine debris, plastics and microplastics could be addressed in the context of the Preparatory Committee established by General Assembly resolution 69/292. Ms. Raubenheimer recalled that the process currently under way in the Assembly was focused on areas beyond national jurisdiction, but there was a need to address land-based sources in dealing with the challenge, including through industry regulation. She further noted the sovereignty of States regarding the regulation of operations on their land territory.

72. One participant suggested that an international task force could be established to close gaps in different legal frameworks. In that regard, Ms. Oral mentioned a UNEP initiative aimed at mapping gaps in regional seas programmes in addressing the marine litter problem, pointing out also that while regional seas programmes did not necessarily have to be identical, they should have a common approach. Ms. Neumann observed that the national level offered a more flexible context for action than the global level.

73. In response to a question regarding the future work of UNEP towards capacity-building to implement the outcome of the second session of the United Nations Environment Assembly, Ms. Savelli highlighted the work of UNEP on the development of an online course on marine litter in collaboration with FAO, IMO and other partners. She noted that UNEP was currently evaluating the course and was building expertise-focused modules. UNEP was partnering with various universities to advance innovation, including engineering and communication focused programmes. She further elaborated on the involvement of UNEP in assisting in the development of regional and national action plans, including the municipal marine litter action plans in South-East Pacific countries, and indicated that UNEP was working to facilitate the exchange of lessons learned between regions with action plans and those where such plans were still missing, including in Africa and Asia.

Agenda item 4
Inter-agency cooperation and coordination

74. *Activities of UN-Oceans.* The Under-Secretary-General for Legal Affairs and United Nations Legal Counsel made a statement in his capacity as focal point of UN-Oceans, providing information on the activities of UN-Oceans since the sixteenth meeting of the Informal Consultative Process.[4]

75. He stated that UN-Oceans had launched the inventory of mandates and activities of its members, developed and funded by FAO, as an online searchable platform on the UN-Oceans website (www.unoceans.org). The inventory would assist UN-Oceans members in identifying possible areas for collaboration and synergy and allow for a more effective and better coordinated response to the mandates and priorities approved by the respective governing bodies of UN-Oceans members. He indicated that the inventory would also assist Member States and relevant stakeholders in identifying opportunities for synergies and greater coherence. By consulting the inventory, States would be in a position to determine the support available from UN-Oceans members to assist them in the implementation of relevant instruments. In that regard, UN-Oceans anticipated that the inventory would become a useful tool in supporting, in an integrated manner, the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, in particular Goal 14. He noted that the next step, supported by the online database, was to identify areas for collaboration and synergies. He also noted that continued updates and fine-tuning of the inventory would require sustainable funding. In that regard, he indicated that, to date, no contributions earmarked for UN-Oceans had been made to the trust fund established by the Secretary-General for the Office of Legal Affairs to support the promotion of international law, as referred to in General Assembly resolutions 69/245 and 70/235. He invited Member States and others in a position to do so to make such contributions.

[4] The full statement is available from www.unoceans.org/documents/en/.

76. The focal point of UN-Oceans further informed the meeting that a number of opportunities had arisen for UN-Oceans to implement its mandate to strengthen and promote coordination and coherence of United Nations system activities related to oceans and coastal areas since the sixteenth meeting of the Informal Consultative Process, including through the organization of joint statements or side events at major events of relevance to the work of UN-Oceans members. UN-Oceans had also assisted with the identification of an encompassing indicator to assess the implementation of target 14.c of the 2030 Agenda. Apart from teleconferences, UN-Oceans had also held face-to-face meetings from 13 to 15 June 2016[5] in the margins of the meeting of the Informal Consultative Process and agreed on its biennial work programme for 2016-2017.[4] Following the statement of the focal point of UN-Oceans, the secretariat organized a short demonstration of the UN-Oceans inventory.

77. In response to a question, information was provided by the Director of the Division for Ocean Affairs and the Law of the Sea regarding the formulation of the indicator for target 14.c.

78. *Regular Process*. In her statement, Ms. Juliette Babb-Riley, Co-Chair of the Ad Hoc Working Group of the Whole on the Regular Process, outlined the work undertaken during the first cycle of the Regular Process, which culminated in the first global integrated marine assessment, and the activities undertaken by the Co-Chairs aimed at raising awareness about the assessment, including in relation to how the Regular Process and the findings of the assessment could contribute to, and create synergies with, other processes at the United Nations. Ms. Babb-Riley stated that in order to implement the second cycle of the Regular Process successfully, Member States should actively participate and provide input to the seventh meeting of the Ad Hoc Working Group of the Whole; nominate experts for the Group of Experts from Latin American and Caribbean States and from Eastern European States, in particular social and economic experts; contribute to the voluntary trust fund; give support for funding of the second cycle from the regular budget; and raise awareness about the assessment at all levels.

79. A view was expressed that the Regular Process was an important process, from which other ocean-related processes, such as the Preparatory Committee established by General Assembly resolution 69/292, could benefit. The importance of contributions to the voluntary trust fund to ensure participation of representatives of developing States was highlighted.

80. The Director of the Division for Ocean Affairs and the Law of the Sea provided an update on the status of the voluntary trust fund for the Regular Process, and echoed the call for further contributions.

Agenda item 5
Process for the selection of topics and panellists so as to facilitate the work of the General Assembly

81. The Co-Chairs introduced item 5, noting that it reflected paragraph 306 of General Assembly resolution 70/235. Representatives were invited to provide their views and make proposals on ways to devise a transparent, objective and inclusive process for the selection of topics and panellists, so as to facilitate the work of the Assembly.

[5] The report of the meeting will be made available at www.unoceans.org.

82. A view was expressed that the current practice of the General Assembly, in the context of its annual resolutions on oceans and the law of the sea, of selecting simultaneously two topics for meetings of the Informal Consultative Process was beneficial to allow advance preparations and selection of panellists.

Agenda item 6
Issues that could benefit from attention in the future work of the General Assembly on oceans and the law of the sea

83. *List of issues*. The Co-Chairs drew attention to the composite streamlined list of issues that could benefit from attention in the future work of the General Assembly on oceans and the law of the sea and invited comments from representatives. The issue of harmful algal blooms, including sargassum, was highlighted by a delegation. The Co-Chairs invited any representative wishing to propose additional issues for inclusion in the list to submit them to the Co-Chairs or to the Secretariat in writing before the end of the meeting of the Informal Consultative Process.

84. *Review of the effectiveness and utility of the Informal Consultative Process*. Delegations reiterated the importance of the Informal Consultative Process and its contribution to the annual review by the General Assembly of ocean affairs and the law of the sea, highlighting it as a unique and informal forum allowing participation by scientific and technical experts along with government representatives. A number of delegations suggested that the Informal Consultative Process could provide an appropriate forum to review on a regular basis the implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 14 and other ocean-related goals of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. It was recalled that the Informal Consultative Process had also contributed to the follow-up to the United Nations conferences on sustainable development. Some other delegations recalled, however, that the high-level political forum on sustainable development was the central body for the review and follow-up of the 2030 Agenda. Some delegations considered that the role of the political forum did not preclude existing processes to follow-up on the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and that a discussion on the issue by the Informal Consultative Process would not undermine the role of the forum.